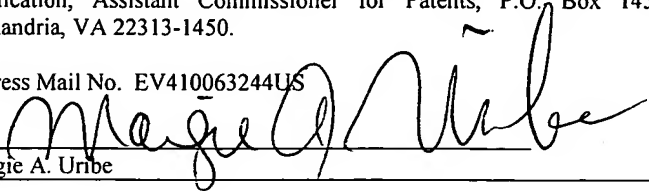


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For

USER-CONFIGURABLE BATHTUB TOY ASSEMBLY

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USER-CONFIGURABLE BATHTUB TOY ASSEMBLY

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] An example of a prior art bathtub toy assembly is illustrated in FIG. 1. Referring thereto, a bath caddy shown generally at 100 is adapted to rest on bathtub edges. The bath caddy 100 includes a depressed basket 112 disposed between two lips or ledges 104 and 108. The lips 104 and 108 are adapted to rest on the edges of a bathtub, while the depressed basket 112 spans the width of the bathtub. Furthermore, the depressed basket 112 is configured with an open lattice construction so that water drains out. Play items (such as a boat 116, a ball 120, a turtle 124 and a play gun 128) may be placed in the depressed basket 112 and removed therefrom by a child as he or she is bathing in the tub. As can be appreciated, the caddy is basically just a play storage basket and has limited play value.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention provides a toy assembly adapted for bathtub and alternatively non-bathtub use. The assembly includes a play support platform with two end flaps hingedly connected to the platform at opposite ends thereof and adapted to fold between at least two positions. In the first position, the end flaps are horizontal relative to the platform and may be supported on the edges of a bathtub (or arms of an armchair). In the second position, the end flaps are vertical relative to the platform and may rest on any horizontal surface, including the floor of a bathtub or, alternatively, on the floor of a room. The assembly may support mechanistic play items which are attachable on the surface of the platform.

[0003] The assembly can include a locking mechanism to securely hold the end flaps in their respective positions. This is accomplished by a hinge mechanism attaching an end flap to the platform and having a mechanism which may be pulled outwardly to lock the end flap in the desired position. As a result, the end flaps are secured into place by the locking mechanism in either position and may be subjected to pressure or jostling without danger of buckling. Since an embodiment of the present invention is geared toward children, the locking mechanism feature is a desirable feature, as children are likely to subject any toy play item to rough treatment and therefore danger of buckling.

[0004] Another aspect of the present invention is to provide means to secure the two foldable end flaps in either functional position. This is accomplished by providing attaching means, such as suction cups, to the free portion of the end flap. When the end flaps are in the horizontal position, the attaching means may serve to attach to the wall adjacent to the bathtub edge, thereby further stabilizing the assembly. When the end flaps are in the vertical position, the attaching means may serve to attach to the horizontal surface on which the assembly lies, thereby further stabilizing the assembly. This is especially helpful when the assembly is positioned in a water-filled bathtub.

[0005] In other words, a multi-use play assembly is disclosed including a play support platform assembly having opposing first and second ends and adapted to support one or more movable play items. An end first flap pivotally is connected to the first end and adapted to be positionable in a wing position extending horizontally out from the play support platform assembly, and in an alternative pivoted leg position extending vertically down from the play support platform assembly and blocked from folding into a horizontal position underneath the play support platform assembly. An end second flap is similarly pivotally connected to the second end and adapted to be positionable in a wing position extending horizontally out from the play support platform assembly, and in an alternative pivoted leg position extending vertically down from the play support platform assembly and blocked from folding into a horizontal position underneath the play support platform assembly. With the first and second flaps in the respective wing positions, the multi-use play assembly can be positioned on a bathtub with the first and second flaps resting on opposing side edges of the bathtub and the play support platform assembly disposed in a horizontal play position over the bathtub and between the side edges of the bathtub. With the first and second flaps in the respective leg positions, the multi-use play assembly can be positioned on a horizontal support surface with the flaps holding the play support platform assembly in a raised horizontal play position spaced above the horizontal support surface.

[0006] Other objects and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent to those persons having ordinary skill in the art to which the present invention pertains from the foregoing description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a bathtub caddy of the prior art in a position extended between the edges of a bathtub.

[0008] FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a configurable bathtub toy assembly of the present invention with end flaps in an open horizontal position and mechanistic play items indicative of a city or an industrial site.

[0009] FIG. 3 is a perspective view of the configurable bathtub toy assembly of FIG. 2 with end flaps in an open horizontal position and resting on the edges of a bathtub, the bathtub toy assembly thereby spanning the width of the bathtub.

[0010] FIG. 4 is a perspective view of the configurable bathtub toy assembly of FIG. 2 with end flaps in a closed vertical position and resting on the horizontal surface of a floor.

[0011] FIG. 5 is a perspective view of the configurable bathtub toy assembly of FIG. 2 with end flaps in a closed vertical position and resting on the horizontal surface of a bathtub.

[0012] FIG. 6 is an enlarged perspective view of a handle attached to or integral with the configurable bathtub toy assembly of FIG. 2.

[0013] FIG. 7 is an enlarged perspective view of a hinge mechanism attaching an end flap to a play support platform of the configurable bathtub toy assembly of FIG. 2.

[0014] FIG. 8 is an enlarged cross-sectional view of the hinge mechanism (of FIG. 7) attaching the end flap to the play support platform of the configurable bathtub toy assembly of FIG. 2.

[0015] FIG. 9 is an enlarged cross-sectional view of a firehouse located on the assembly of FIG. 2 illustrating a toy helicopter depressing a button on the roof of the firehouse and thereby causing a door on the firehouse to open and release a toy car.

[0016] FIG. 10 is an enlarged cross-sectional view of an elevator located on the assembly of FIG. 2 illustrating a crank rotating to bring the lift of the elevator to one of three levels.

[0017] FIG. 11 is an enlarged exploded view of a pump located on the assembly of FIG. 2 being depressed to release water.

[0018] FIG. 12 is an enlarged view of a crane located on the assembly of FIG. 2 illustrating a crank rotating to raise and lower the crane.

[0019] FIG. 13 is an enlarged view of a floatable toy car of the present invention positionable and movable on the configurable bathtub toy assembly of FIG. 2.

[0020] FIG. 14 is an enlarged view of a floatable toy dump truck positionable and movable on the configurable bathtub toy assembly of FIG. 2.

[0021] FIG. 15 is an enlarged view of a floatable toy helicopter positionable and movable on the configurable bathtub toy assembly of FIG. 2.

[0022] FIG. 16 is a perspective view of an alternative bathtub toy assembly similar to that of FIG. 2 with mechanistic play items indicative of a kitchen.

[0023] FIG. 17 is a perspective view of the toy car in FIG. 13 floating in water.

[0024] FIG. 18 is a disassembled view of the toy car of FIG. 13 illustrating a chassis and a floatable device thereof.

[0025] FIG. 19 is a disassembled view of the toy car of FIG. 13 illustrating a body of the toy car thereof.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

[0026] FIG. 2 illustrates generally at 200 a configurable bathtub toy assembly of the present invention comprising a play support platform 204 and two end flaps 208 and 212. The play support platform 204 is approximately rectangular in shape with four edges 240, 244, 248 and 252; however, other (non-rectangular) shapes are within the scope of the invention. The play support platform 204 is configured to hold play items (not illustrated in this figure) in a chamber 228 underneath a surface 232 of the play support platform 204. The support platform 204 is approximately the width of an average bathtub, approximately eighteen inches in length and ten inches in width. All components of the bathtub toy assembly 200 are preferably made up of water-resistant plastic or similar material.

[0027] As shown in FIG. 2, the first end flap 208 is attached to the edge 240 of the play support platform 204, while the second end flap 212 is attached at the edge 244 of the play support platform 204, a location equal and opposite to the first end flap 208. In the illustration, the first end flap 208 is shown in an open horizontal position 210 relative to the play support platform 204. Similarly, the second end flap 212 is also shown in an open horizontal position 210 relative to the play support platform 204. Both end flaps 208 and 212 may be adjusted from the open horizontal position 210 to a closed vertical position 214, as shown in outline form in FIG. 2. Additionally, the end flaps 208 and 212 may have at least one suction cup 220 disposed

at their free ends, or, alternatively, disposed on legs (not shown) extending from the end-flaps 208 and 212.

[0028] To stimulate the child's interest, the present invention may have a variety of interactive mechanistic play items and features as illustrated in FIG. 2. For example, the interactive mechanistic play items may include a firehouse 400, an elevator system 416, a water-tower connected to a pump 444 and/or a crane 460 (explained in detail below). The versatility of the mechanistic play items is apparent in that they are attachable to the surface 232 of the play support platform 204 at more than one location. For example, the crane 460 can be placed in the location of the water pump 444, and vice-versa.

[0029] One feature shown on the surface 232 of the play support platform 204 is a trap door 224. The trap door 224 opens to the chamber 228 of the play support platform 204 and a play item (not shown in this figure) may be placed in the chamber 236 therethrough. Another such "door" is illustrated in FIG. 2 by the panel door 230. The panel door 230 is configured to open outwardly, or to slide from left to right (not shown), allowing the child user to access the chamber 228 and retrieve or store play items therein. Additionally, a helipad 260 is shown on the each of the end flaps 208 and 212, respectively. A child may use the helopad to "land" a play helicopter 512 (not shown here), for example.

[0030] Referring to FIG. 3, the configurable bathtub toy assembly 200 is shown on a bathtub 300. The end flaps 208 and 212 are in an open horizontal position 210 and rest on edges 304 and 308 of the bathtub 300. The suction cups 220 on the first end flap 208 may be releasably adhered to a wall 312 adjacent to the bathtub 300, thereby stabilizing the bathtub toy assembly 200 when in this position.

[0031] The configurable bathtub toy assembly 200 is shown in FIG. 4 on the horizontal surface of a floor (the ground or the like). The end flaps 208 and 212 are in a closed vertical position 214 relative to the play support platform 204. The suction cups 220 on both end flaps 208 and 212 may adhere to the floor to stabilize the bathtub toy assembly 200 in the upright position. FIG. 5 illustrates the bathtub toy assembly 200 disposed on an alternative horizontal surface, namely the floor 316 of the bathtub 300. In combination, FIGS. 4 and 5 illustrate the versatile nature of the bathtub toy assembly 200, adaptable for both bathtub and non-bathtub use.

[0032] In FIG. 6, a handle 216 is illustrated on the play support platform 204 in an upright position. During play time, the handle 216 may be reversibly folded in the direction as shown by

an arrow 217 into the depressed region 218 so that it becomes part of the play surface 232 of the play support platform 204. When play time is concluded, the handle 216 may be moved to the upright position in the direction as shown by the arrow 217 for easy transportation to another location or for storage.

[0033] FIG. 7 illustrates a locking hinge mechanism 264 connecting the end flap 212 to the play support platform 204. The retaining part 272 of the hinge mechanism 264 is in contact with the lateral wall 276 of the play support platform 204 and the under-surface 280 of the end flap 212. In the position shown, the locking mechanism 268 locks the end flap 212 in the open horizontal position 210. When the locking mechanism 268 is pulled outwardly, the end flap 212 is released to the closed vertical position 214 (not shown in this figure). In addition to the stabilizing effect of the bathtub edges 304 and 308 on which the end flaps 208 and 212 rest, the locking mechanism of the hinge 264 further stabilizes the end flap 212. On the equal opposite end flap 208, the same type of locking hinge mechanism 264 is similarly situated (not shown). Thus, the bathtub toy assembly 200 is stabilized against jostling or jiggling from a child playing with the toy. It should be appreciated that other locking mechanisms, such as a push button, resilient snap, cam mechanism or peg-and-detent may be utilized as an alternative locking mechanism for the present invention. FIG. 8 illustrates a cross-section of the hinge mechanism just described.

[0034] FIG. 9 illustrates one of several mechanistic toys designed to stimulate the child's interest. In FIG. 9, a cross-section of a firehouse 400 is illustrated. The firehouse 400 is situated on the surface 232 of the play support platform 204. When the button 404 on the roof of the firehouse 400 is depressed in the direction as shown by an arrow 405 by using a toy helicopter 512, for example, a door 408 opens in the direction as shown by an arrow 409 to the outside and a car 504 rolls out onto the play support platform 204 in the direction as shown by an arrow 410. The child may then proceed to move the car 504 through the trap door 224 into the chamber 228, or, alternatively, down a ramp 262 into the bathtub water or outside environment, depending upon the location of the assembly 200. After depressing the button 404 with the helicopter 512, the child may move the helicopter 512 down a sliding ramp 412 and onto the surface 232 of the play support platform 204 for further play. This is but one example of many interactive play methods which the present invention has to offer.

[0035] In FIG. 10, a cross-section of an elevator assembly 416 is illustrated. The elevator assembly bisects the play support platform 204 at one location. The lift 436 of the elevator assembly 416 accesses three levels 420, 424 and 428 as shown by an arrow 429. The lift 436 reaches the levels when a child user turns the crank 432 in a clockwise direction as shown by an arrow 433. The elevator lift may transport a car 504, a dump truck 508 or a helicopter 512 to any of the respective levels 420, 424 and 428. A ramp 436 may be removably attached as shown by an arrow 437 to the lift 416 so that any of the play items 504, 508 or 512 may roll down the ramp 436 to water or the immediate environment surrounding the assembly 200.

[0036] To further stimulate the child's interest, the assembly 200 may include a water spraying pump 444, as illustrated in FIG. 11. The pump comprises a pump head 452, a water reservoir 456 and a stand 448. The pump head 452 may be depressed as shown by an arrow 457 to release water from the water reservoir 456. The pump head 452 may be rotated about its axis as shown by an arrow 453 so that different areas of the assembly 200 may be wetted by the water released by the pump head 452. Additionally, a crane 460 with a workable or non-workable grasping claw 478 is illustrated in FIG. 12. The crane 460 may be raised or lowered by turning the crank 468 in a clockwise direction as shown by arrow 469. The crane 460, if workable, may be used to grasp small items, such as play items 504, 508 and 512 (described below) from the water or the immediate environment surrounding the assembly 200. Finally, the crane 460 may be rotatable about a platform 472 as shown by an arrow 513.

[0037] FIGS. 13, 14 and 15 illustrate play items 504, 508 and 512, a toy car, a dump truck and a helicopter, respectively, with dimensions of approximately three inches in length, two inches in width and one and one-half inches in height. The play items 504, 508 and 512 are positionable by a child user at various locations on the surface 232 of the play support platform 204. Each play item 504, 508 and 512 can comprise a body 528, a set of wheels 524 and a chassis 516 with a floatable device 520 disposed therebetween. The wheels 524 can move relative to the chassis 516 allowing a child user to roll the play items 504, 508 and 512 about the surface 232 of the play support platform 204. Additionally, each play item 504, 508 and 512 is preferably made of water-resistant plastic, which has the advantage of resisting rust. The floatable device 520 may be comprised of foam, blow-molded plastic or a sealed chamber (shown in FIG. 18), advantageously allowing the play items to roll and float in water and further stimulating the child. The floatable device 520 may be positioned between to the chassis of the

vehicular play item and is approximately one-half inch by three-fourths inch in dimension. The play items 504, 508 and 512 are yet another feature of the present invention allowing for interactive play for the child.

[0038] In FIG. 16, an alternative embodiment of the present invention is illustrated. As illustrated, the alternative configurable bathtub toy assembly is directed to a kitchen theme. The basic structure is essentially the same as described in FIG. 2, namely, the alternative embodiment comprises a play support platform 204 with pivotal end flaps 208 and 212 attached thereto. As in the assembly illustrated in FIG. 2, the end flaps 208 and 212 may be positioned from an open horizontal position 210 to rest on the edges 304 and 308 of a bathtub 300, for example, or to a closed vertical position 214 to rest on the floor (the ground or the like, not illustrated). The mechanistic play items, however, will be indicative of a kitchen and may include a toy oven 600, a toy dishwasher 604 and a toy cone-holder tray 608, for example. The chamber 228 of the alternative embodiment may be representative of kitchen drawers and, like the assembly described in FIG. 2, may be used to store play items, such as a cake 700, a milkshake 704, and doughnut 708, a cupcake 712 or an ice cream cone 716. Alternatively, the play items 700, 704, 708, 712 and 716 may be utilized on the surface 232 of the alternative embodiment, as illustrated.

[0039] Regarding the play items 700, 704, 708, 712 and 716 as illustrated in the alternative embodiment, it should be appreciated that the play items may function as a dispenser for soap, shampoo, conditioners or even lotion. Alternatively, the play items 700, 704, 708, 712 and 716 may be hollow and adaptable to blow bubbles, such as by a mechanism which attaches to the faucet (not shown). Additionally, similar to the play items illustrated in FIG. 2, the play items demonstrated in the alternative embodiment may be made of water-resistant plastic with a floatable device disposed within, allowing the play item to float in water. Alternatively, the play items 700, 704, 708, 712 and 716 may be made of soap.

[0040] In addition to the play themes illustrated in FIGS. 2 and 16, respectively, it should be appreciated that other play themes and configurations to capture a child's interest may be utilized in conjunction with the present invention. For example, the theme of a town square, amusement park or battlefield may equally stimulate a child's interest. It should be appreciated that the themes and/or configurations described, in addition to others, may be incorporated into the present invention.

[0041] The many features of the present invention, as described previously, serve to present a child with an entertaining interactive toy which stimulates his or her imagination. Such descriptions and illustrations should be considered illustrative of the present invention and not limiting in any way. As an example, the present invention encompasses a game board theme situated on the play support platform 204 in which two children play on either side. Alternatively, the present invention encompasses a teaching tool in which, for example, the play support platform 204 is imprinted with the letters of the alphabet and a child matches a play item that starts with the imprinted letter to the imprinted letter, such as a toy banana next to the imprinted letter "B."

[0042] From the foregoing detailed description, it will be evident that there are a number of changes, adaptations and modifications of the present invention which come within the province of those skilled in the art. The scope of the invention includes any combination of the elements from the different species or embodiments disclosed herein, as well as subassemblies, assemblies, and methods thereof. However, it is intended that all such variations not departing from the spirit of the invention be considered as within the scope thereof.